

Exploring personal EFL teaching metaphors in pre-service teacher education

WEN-CHUAN LIN

Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages, Taiwan

PAICHI PAT SHEIN

National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan

SHU CHING YANG¹

National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan

ABSTRACT: Metaphors are significant in teacher education, because they can provide insights into complex concepts of teaching and learning and thus provide a window into the comprehension of teachers' personal experiences. This study employed metaphorical analysis to investigate how pre-service teachers view English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses at the beginning of their teacher education programmes. Forty student teachers in a teacher certificate programme in secondary education were asked to provide metaphors of how they conceptualise themselves as EFL teachers. Findings revealed that the teachers' metaphorical conceptualisations appeared to be more student-centred, reflecting beliefs about teaching practice and generally stemming from personal and school experiences. Overall, the written metaphors provided access to pre-service teachers' preconceived notions of teaching prior to entering the classroom. Metaphors thus provide a framework with which to assess teaching and a means for teachers to enhance self-awareness and professional development. This study leads to several conclusions that highlight some implications for teacher education and to ideas for further investigations.

KEYWORDS: EFL; images of teaching; metaphor; prospective teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Human thought processes are largely metaphorical in nature, and metaphor, as a form of linguistic device, can serve as a conduit that systematises human meaning and action. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest, "Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (p. 3). Metaphor can also be seen as "a bridge enabling passage from one world to another" (Shiff, 1979, p. 106), or as Cameron and Deignan (2006) suggest, a metaphor can be viewed as connecting two dissimilar ideas that mutually interact in the mind to create something new that evolves into something greater than the sum of its parts.

Metaphors are of paramount significance in teacher education. As Munby (1986) suggests, to understand the content of teachers' thinking, it is fruitful to pay close attention to the metaphors that emerge when teachers express themselves. The

¹ Corresponding Author: Shu Ching Yang, 70 Nein-hi Rd., Graduate Institute of Education, National Sun Yat-sen Univ. E-mail address: shyang@mail.nsysu.edu.tw.

metaphors that teachers use represent, not only their perceived realities, but also their professional ideas, attitudes and practices. Metaphors provide insights into complex concepts of teaching, learning and schooling, and they provide a window into the comprehension of teachers' personal experiences. In other words, as argued by Miller (1987), metaphors act as "translators" of experience.

As Freeman and Richards (1993) contend, conceptions of language teaching and the work of language teachers that shape the multiple activities in the field of language instruction are generally tacit and often go unquestioned. Teachers often make use of metaphorical expressions when they talk about their profession, beliefs and daily teaching practices for example, Ben-Peretz, Mendelson, & Kron, 2003; Carroll & Eifler, 2002; Carter, 1990; Collins & Green, 1990; Guerrero & Villamil, 2002; Inbar, 1996; Marshall, 1990a; Martinez, Saulea & Huber, 2001; Oxford et al., 1998; Weade & Ernst, 1990; Yung, 2001). In this sense, teaching metaphors provide a framework with which to assess teaching and a means for teachers to augment self-awareness and professional development.

In recent years, many researchers have advocated the use of metaphor as a cognitive device for effectively attempting to understand prospective teachers' images of teaching and learning (for example, BouJaoude, 2000; Bozik, 2002; Bullough & Stokes, 1994; Carlson, 2001; Fain, 2001; Mahlios & Maxson, 1998; Marshall, 1990b; Palmquist, 2001; Vadeboncoeur & Torres, 2003; White & Smith, 1994). For example, Marchant's (1992) large-scale study of pre-service teachers identifies eight generic metaphors, most of which convey a level of leadership. These generic comparisons include the teacher as authority (judge, police officer, prison warden), caregiver (parent, doctor), director (movie director, orchestra conductor), captive (prisoner), party host, person on trial (in a courtroom awaiting the verdict of a jury), referee, and agent of change (advocate of change). Similarly, Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) cross-cultural study of Chinese teachers provided teachers with the following open-ended stem, "A good teacher is...". In their study, they identified several metaphors of dominance, such as comparing a good teacher to a parent, a source of knowledge, a guide, a model, and/or a moral example. Both of these sets of findings reveal the similarity of the metaphors revealing that, apart from existing cultural differences, how teachers view teaching can span social and cultural boundaries. However, what might be intriguing is the potential differences among the metaphors that reflect teachers' culturally founded beliefs.

In Taiwan, as a result of deep-rooted Confucianism, the concepts of "teacher" are generally different from those in the Western cultural context. One Taiwanese concept represents the respectful culture in classrooms where asymmetrical power relationships between the teacher and the students have been the norm, thus leading to inevitable interactional patterns of classroom control (for example, Lin, 2008). It could be argued that this heightened classroom control is also the result of excessive academic competition in the Taiwanese society. Within this cultural context, the concept of "teacher" may suggest a one-way flow of information from the teacher to the students rather than mutual communication or interaction among them. Because metaphor is part of our way of thinking and talking, it translates cultural experience and is learned through participation in particular socio-cultural groups (Cameron & Deignan, 2006; Kövecses, 2005); thus, to better understand teaching metaphors, the socio-cultural dimension cannot be ignored.

In the field of second or foreign language (L2/FL) instruction, although the value of pursuing metaphorical analysis is acknowledged, few empirical studies have been conducted (Block, 1992; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Ellis, 1998; Farrell, 2006; Oxford et al., 1998). The existing literature includes numerous metaphors for assessing the concept of “teacher”, each providing different information and calling for different responses. For example, in their investigation of narratives, interviews and documents for metaphorical themes, Oxford et al. (1998) organised themes around four philosophical orientations: social order, cultural transmission, learner-centred growth, and social reform. Teachers oriented towards social order valued “the well being of society” as a major pedagogical concern, viewing themselves as manufacturers, competitors, hanging judges, doctors or controllers of the mind and behaviour (p. 14). Those teachers with a cultural transmission perspective viewed their role as one of a conduit or repeater. Learner-centred teachers portrayed themselves as nurturers, lovers, spouses, scaffolders, entertainers, or delegators. Teachers oriented towards social reform saw themselves as acceptors or learning partners.

A study of Puerto Ricans by Guerrero and Villamil (2002) identified nine distinct conceptual metaphors for in-services for English as a second language (ESL) teachers in terms of teacher, learner, and learning process alongside teacher assumptions and theories underlying their beliefs. Various metaphorical conceptualisations of the ESL profession emerged, and teachers were most frequently represented in the classic roles of leader, provider of knowledge, agent of change, nurturer and artist, whereas learners were represented by a wide range of metaphors from very active (for example, musician, construction worker) to very inactive (for example, television viewer, piece of clay). The identification of features of metaphors provides a frame of reference for understanding student teachers’ philosophical orientations, roles and practices in EFL teaching. This Puerto Rican study shed some light on our examination of pre-service EFL teachers’ metaphorical conceptualisations. In fact, it was our intent to parallel Guerrero and Villamil’s (2002) findings by asking our Taiwanese participants similar sets of questions. A cross-cultural examination and comparison could, therefore, be made to enhance our understanding of the concept of teacher.

THE PRESENT STUDY

We explored metaphors along the lines of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Cameron (2003), who view metaphors as vehicles of human meaning that not only connect the mind to the physical world but also provide new ways of thinking that extend the sense of lexical items to promote communication across different discursive domains (Cameron, 2003). It was our intent to explore the tacit conceptions of language teaching and the work of language teachers that shape the multiple activities of EFL instruction in Taiwan. Therefore, examining the metaphorical conceptions in the field of EFL instruction and how they might influence performance was of paramount importance. The purpose of this study was to (1) examine the personal teaching metaphors of prospective EFL teachers enrolled in an English teaching practicum course in relation to factors such as cultural context, personal history and teaching experience and (2) identify conceptual themes derived from these metaphorical conceptualisations. To this end, we hope to understand how pre-service teachers view EFL teaching at the beginning of their teacher education programme. Through this

metaphorical analysis, we also intended to help raise pre-service teachers' awareness about their roles and functions in their future classroom teaching, a concept that is beneficial for professional development.

METHODS

Participants

The participants included 40 student teachers in a teacher certificate programme in secondary education, who were enrolled in an English teaching practicum course at a university in Taiwan. The majority of the participants were female, between the ages of 23 and 30, and in their last year of university. To enrol in this pre-service programme, students were required to have sophomore status, pass a competitive entrance examination, and have 26 credit hours of education and methods courses, including at least one year of teaching experience. Approximately 80 per cent had teaching experience in secondary or vocational school classrooms. All of the participants had 22 credit hours. The participants' background information, such as academic preparation, years of teaching experience, current teaching level and gender, is presented in Table 1.

	Gender		Degree seeking		Teaching experience			
	Female	Male	Master	Bachelor	Primary	Junior High	Senior High/ Vocational and above	None
n	32	8	7	33	15	17	13	9
%	75%	25%	17.5%	82.5%	80%			20%
					(Some have experience teaching in more than 3 educational levels)			

Table 1. Background information of participants

Data collection

Data were collected as an integral part of an English teaching practicum course, and participation in the study was voluntary. During the first two weeks of the class, the participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to understand their beliefs and assumptions about their teaching of EFL through the use of metaphor. The open-ended, take-home survey included five sets of questions (Guerrero & Villamil, 2002), which asked students to (1) write metaphors about how they conceptualised themselves as EFL teachers, (2) refer to the following elements (for example, instructors, learners, teaching and learning processes, school environment, language and culture) to specifically address their chosen metaphors, (3) refer to a personal scenario or a story about others as an example for their chosen metaphors, (4) think about how the metaphors reflect their current and future daily teaching and learning English, and (5) elaborate on the theoretical assumptions underlying their metaphors.

To prevent power imbalances between the researcher and the student-teachers from interfering with the data collection and the reliability and validity of results, the purposes of this study were discussed, consent was obtained, and the participants were

told during the data collection that research results would not be reflected in their final scores. All of the participants were told that the questions asked in the study were not evaluative and that their responses to the survey would be used only for academic purposes and would be kept confidential. Throughout the study, the participants used pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Data analysis

Pre-service teachers' written metaphors and explanations in response to the first and second questions were classified into conceptual categories. We created subcategories from existing categories to link the potential relationships across metaphors. Moreover, because metaphors are like languages, they serve as symbolic tools that are generally abstract and arbitrary in nature. Metaphors may appear to be ambiguous because, as Inbar (1996) cautions, "Metaphors can never convey the full content of their message.... Metaphors rest on the mental process of selection and emphasis. They represent an emphasis of certain selected features of a whole phenomenon" (pp. 78-79). Therefore, we used a recursive approach by repeated cross-examination of the data among researchers to avoid latent subjective interpretation of the metaphors by any one researcher (Cameron, 2003). For metaphors that seemed to fit more than one conceptual typology (Cameron & Low, 1999a, 1999b; Guerrero & Villamil, 2000, 2002), we examined the predominant elements of such metaphors to achieve the best categorisation possible. For the third and fourth questions, we analysed the contextual backgrounds represented in the pre-service teachers' metaphors. For the fifth question, we analysed any theoretical assumptions underlying the teachers' chosen metaphors.

RESULTS

We used metaphors as a tool to examine pre-service teachers' images of what it means to be a teacher. We classified the responses to the open-ended cue, "I think to be an EFL teacher is like...", into eight categories (See Table 2). This section presents the eight categories from the most frequently used metaphor type to the least used. Moreover, we found that some participants used multiple metaphors in thinking about themselves as EFL teachers. It would be intriguing to explore the combinations of their metaphorical conceptualisations. Excerpts of teacher metaphors are incorporated to provide a rich picture of each metaphorical conceptualisation of EFL teachers.

1. Nurturer

A large number of participants perceived language teaching as a form of nurturing and providing support that promotes student growth and development. Fourteen participants perceived EFL teachers as farmers or gardeners who water, fertilise and prune crops.

An EFL teacher is like an endeavour made by a hardworking farmer who plunges into the cultivation of the plants (learners). A farmer, working at sunrise and resting at sunset, devotes [his/herself] to the demanding process of ploughing and weeding, which includes ploughing, planting, fertilising, irrigating by channel water (similar to the instruction process)...the farmer's value and concepts (language/culture) of farming will influence the quality of the plants. (Rita)

An EFL teacher is like a gardener who manipulates professional knowledge and experience to care for flowers in the garden. A good garden is like the school environment, where sufficient sunlight and water are like school facilities or ethos that facilitate learning. The flowers are the students; each has his/her own individual features....the gardener appropriates various cultivation [techniques] in terms of different flowers along the way of growth. (May)

Metaphor	n (%)	Category
Nurturer	15 (30)	farmer/gardener (n = 14) parent (n = 1)
Cooperative leader	14 (28)	movie/theatre director (n = 2) tour guide (n = 5) symphony director/conductor (n = 2) ship pilot/captain (n = 2), little league coach (n = 1) navigator/guider (n = 2)
Provider of knowledge	6 (12)	chef (n = 1) printer (n = 1) broadcaster/disk jockey (n = 1) architectural designer (n = 1) musician (n = 1) orator (n = 1)
Artist	4 (8)	magician (n = 1) host (n = 1) clown/juggler (n = 1) talking book (n = 1)
Innovator	3 (6)	leader of an expedition/explorer (n = 2) sponge (n = 1)
Provider of tools	3 (6)	clerk or owner of a grocery store/market (n = 2) bee (n = 1)
Challenger	3 (6)	shepherd or animal tamer (n = 2) coach (n = 1)
Repairer	2 (4)	car mechanic (n = 1) consulting doctor (n = 1)

Table 2. EFL teachers' roles metaphorically conceptualised

One participant identified herself as a parent of a newborn who uncovers the newborn's talents and potentials with patience. She stated, "An EFL teacher is like the parent of a newborn baby because English is a brand new language to all students so that they have to learn it in a way a new born baby learns its mother tongue. Students should be considered as babies, given full patience and repeated instruction from the teacher as parent." (Luisa)

2. Cooperative leader

Six metaphors represented the teacher as a cooperative leader. These included movie or theatre director (n = 2), tour guide (n = 5), conductor (n = 2), ship pilot or captain (n = 2), little league coach (n = 1), and navigator or guider (n = 2). The participants in this category believed that learners should have primary ownership of their learning processes and perceived EFL teachers as mentors who provide the scaffolding and direction to help learners achieve their goals.

For example, Lily viewed herself as a well-rounded director and producer and learners as active actors. She contended that the script is not a formulated body of knowledge that must be ingested; instead, it is interactive and negotiable. The director leads the actors by coaching and bringing their talent to light. The actor interprets his or her role in the play and is not a puppet.

Five of the participants believed that EFL teachers should help learners identify their programme according to their interests, just as tour guides guide “tourists along the journey of learning English and leading the way of proper direction”, as Ann put it. Two participants viewed the role of an EFL teacher as a chorus or symphony director who “uncovers each student’s (performer’s) merits to facilitate their full development of working together in harmony” (Wei).

One of the participants who selected a conductor metaphor did so because of movies that had influenced her deeply, such as *Mr. Holland’s Opus*. In the movie, as Tina noted, “the wind band did not play well at first, but after the protagonist’s patient instruction and conduction, they became a great band.” Two participants reported that an EFL teacher is like “a pilot in a harbour” who leads ships that are sailing in a strange harbour. In the same way that a pilot has local knowledge of a harbour, an EFL teacher should have profound knowledge of the English language and culture. Another participant viewed EFL teachers as automobile satellite navigation systems and learners as drivers, emphasising that students need guidance because they are unable to find the way by themselves.

3. Provider of knowledge

Metaphors of a chef, printer, broadcaster, architectural designer, musician, or orator were used to depict EFL teaching as a process of dispensing language knowledge to students, who are the recipients of the knowledge. What seemed to be important in language teaching is not the learners themselves but the teacher’s design and delivery of the materials. For example, Zoan viewed herself as “a printing machine while students are sheets of blank paper. The teacher will print out appropriate academic or everyday knowledge and transmit it to students.” The author of a cooking metaphor viewed teachers as follows:

A chef knows how to mix different materials and seasonings together to create tasty dishes for students as tasters. The cooking process is like the teacher’s instruction; the ingredients are like the school ethos and teaching materials, while the seasonings and the time used in cooking are like the pedagogy that can assist students’ learning. While cooking, the chef will take tasters’ nutrition and taste into consideration and measure appropriate ingredients similar to pedagogic materials in teaching, which must be carefully chosen for learners’ benefits. (Sophie)

The architect metaphor is similar to the chef metaphor, with teachers as architects and students as the finishing construction of a building. In both of the views presented above, language teachers attempt to produce the best product possible with the appropriate materials for effective learning. Language teaching is more of a one-way flow of information, skills and values from the teacher as expert to the learners.

The radio disc jockey and the musician metaphors view EFL teachers as the medium through which students are exposed to the language environment. Instruction is akin to the disc jockey’s or the musician’s arrangement of musical programming or

performance, whereas the learners are the audience of the programme or performance. As the participant using the musician metaphor illustrated,

A creator is another identity for an EFL teacher. As a musician tends to infuse meaning to music and manages to make it impressive, so an EFL teacher is seeking to rearrange language sentences through lively pedagogy and thus encourages learners' interests and motivation. An EFL teacher is learning how to pass on their knowledge to students as well. (Angela)

Comparatively, the process of oration is similar to a musical performance in which the performers infused their affective spirit into conveying the meanings or messages through the words and musical notes.

4. Artist

The view of the teacher as an artist reflects a belief that teaching is “a craft of invention and personalisation”. This metaphor extends the nurturing metaphor by emphasising teachers' creative attempts to motivate and attract learners. However, different from the category description of artist by Guerrero and Villamil (2002), our participants did not view learners as clay or other raw materials to be moulded by teachers (Williams & Burden, 1997). Instead, teaching was viewed as an artistic expression of the teacher's creativity, artistry and personality. Therefore, the teachers' attempts to engage learners or to make learning interesting do not imply a constructive or active teacher role.

For example, Jade viewed teachers as magicians producing wonders by stimulating the joy of learning. Ellen characterised EFL teachers as versatile clowns “equipped with well-rounded skills in performance serving to attract students' attention. He not only needs to learn a variety show and circus performance, but also some special skills such as blowing out the fire, riding a single-wheeled bicycle, walking on stilts, etc.” Linda regarded EFL teachers as hosts of TV programmes, who not only are eloquent but also keep abreast of the times. A host uses language, expressions, and timely movements to attract each student in a way that appeals to that student's talent and personality, and then the host guides the student to the primary learning goal. The host metaphor is classified as artists rather than as providers of knowledge because many students view the teachers in the same light as other professional artists in the telecommunication industry. Sue depicted an “English teacher as a big, colourful book with text, pictures and audio, capturing the attention of students. Teachers should integrate basic English language and culture into their teaching for the students to gain English skills from the enjoyable learning process.” This talking book metaphor emphasises teachers' creative attempts to motivate and attract learners during the processes of EFL teaching and learning.

5. Innovator

Three participants conceptualised an EFL teacher as an explorer, a sponge, or a traveller. Similar to the cooperative leader metaphor, the innovator metaphor particularly emphasised that EFL teachers should keep current with new methods and developments in the field to be able to provide an optimal language-learning environment. Under the explorer metaphor, as Joyce stated,

An EFL teacher is like an expedition team leader who leads the whole team marching towards the exploration of language treasury and remains open to learning relevant

knowledge, tries to introduce English cultural background to students to raise their interest, and manipulates various pedagogies to cope with students' diversified learning styles.

One participant, Peter, chose a journey as a metaphor for EFL teaching with an emphasis on innovation, thus differentiating it from the tour guide metaphor. He commented that "a teacher is like a foreign traveller who needs to learn new information from time to time. Learners are foreign travellers, too. Classrooms are where we travel; learners not only learn what is in the classroom, they should know something other than textbooks to adapt to social changes. Teachers should also innovate their teaching methods and materials." Similarly, David's sponge metaphor also focused on the notion that teachers as innovators must absorb new information to "adjust themselves to catch up to the times and adapt to the changing world".

6. Provider of tools

Some participants depicted an EFL teacher as a tool or service provider, such as a clerk or grocery store vendor, and learners as builders. As Nancy noted,

An EFL teacher is like a clerk in the store who provides professional marketing service to customers to raise consumer interests. As the clerk has a good command of knowledge over the commodity, an EFL teacher should be equipped with knowledge whereby appropriate services can be made possible. It takes both sides for the consumption; therefore, students should take initiatives, rather than being passive receivers of knowledge.

Alice considered an EFL teacher as "a vendor at a grocery store equipped with a variety of merchandise. The vendor provides a large quantity and a diverse quality of goods to fulfil different customers' needs, and consumers come to the store and select the goods themselves." The teacher constructs an enriched language-learning environment and provides students the tools in accordance with their aptitude, but the learners themselves set and meet the goals.

Another participant, Miranda, portrayed an EFL teacher as a flower, learners as butterflies or bees, and the school as a large garden. This metaphor could be categorised under the nurture category, as flowers invite bees to collect pollen and nectar to turn it into honey. However, the participant particularly emphasised that learners are like bees, making the best out of the flowers' offerings, and the teacher is a mediator in the language-learning process. As is apparent from this depiction, the tool-provider metaphor is different from that of knowledge-provider because the latter emphasises that language learning is more a one-way flow of information from the teacher to the learner.

7. Challenger

In the challenger category, the participants perceived EFL teaching as training in which EFL teachers maintain an orderly learning environment with predictable activities. Complying with behavioural psychology, teachers should monitor students and use a routine of mimicry and repetition to produce certain learning behaviours. As two participants commented in their metaphor of an animal tamer, "in the environment of teaching language, we need constant stimulus so that students can imperceptibly acquire the abilities that they are asked to acquire. If an animal trainer does not constantly train the tiger, the tiger would be unwilling to jump through the

flaming hoop after a period of time. The lion on the stage may want to jump through the flaming hoop because of being threatened by the animal trainer or being lured by meat” (Judy).

Another participant, Tracy, viewed an EFL teacher as a shepherd and an animal tamer.

A teacher, like an animal tamer, has to train students to acquire knowledge of learning English while also, like a shepherd, guide them along the way of food hunting. The instruction process takes patience and training from teachers (tamers) invoking reinforcement of rewards and punishment for habit formation while also needing guidance from teachers (shepherds) providing appropriate pedagogical material.

Similarly, but regarding the training of humans instead of animals, one participant (Stella), perceived her role as an EFL teacher as the coach of a gymnast or other athlete. Consistent with the gymnastic theory of mind (Herron, 1982), the teacher in the gymnast coach metaphor is informed by psychology, compares the mind to the body, and suggests that language teaching requires rigorous training to strengthen muscles.

The relationship between an EFL teacher and students is like the relationship between the coach and the athlete. Instructors are like coaches who not only train athletes’ skills, but also communicate with them. Learners are like athletes who receive coaches’ instructions and teaching. The teaching process is just like training. (Tracy) Tracy’s depiction is comparable to the audio-lingual method, derived from research on learning associated with psychology (Brooks, 1964), in which language learning is a process of habit formation through well-controlled repetition and reinforcement of appropriate responses triggered by the teaching stimuli.

8. Repairer

The metaphor of a repairman or a doctor used by two of the participants views learners as individuals who possess deficiencies that must be fixed or treated by teachers. The goal of teaching focuses on a fixed outcome and accommodates the individual differences of learners. The teacher is like a mechanic who troubleshoots any broken-down car parts, or students. Students are in danger of falling to pieces, and the teacher must correct students’ errors. This metaphor emphasises that a teacher should remain current on innovative knowledge and use contemporary pedagogy to meet each individual’s needs, just as a mechanic must always be aware of up-to-date motor technology. Instead of cars, Monica viewed learners as patients who must consult doctors for medical needs. The teacher should be like a doctor attending to the patients’ needs and providing therapy and counselling. The teacher’s instructions are remedies for students’ language errors. Monica compared teachers to doctors, saying, “Teaching is like a doctor of traditional Chinese medicine who diagnoses the patient, then prescribes medicine to cure the illness. Schools are like a general hospital.”

Although this metaphor category reflects a “mechanic of the mind” viewpoint in that it assumes that learners are damaged and in need of mending, the participants in the study did not hold the view that learning demands disciplining the uninformed mind, a process that involves repetitious, mundane and routine learning. Rather, they emphasised removing barriers to, or errors in, student learning while using multiple

methods to enrich teaching to engage students. Accordingly, they posited that teachers should be flexible, open to new ideas, use a variety of teaching strategies and/or methodologies, and address any learning difficulties or confusion that students might have.

9. The use of multiple metaphors to describe teaching

Some participants combined two or more perspectives to describe an effective teaching strategy. They felt that EFL teachers must fulfil many roles simultaneously, and thus, they used multiple metaphors in thinking about themselves as teachers (for example, sponge and tour guide, a cluster of repairman and innovator, a blend of travel guide and magician). For example, the author of both the repairman and the innovator metaphors illustrated that car technology changes continuously, and thus a mechanic must continually learn more skills and information. A teacher is like a repairman who has to identify the proper teaching method to cope with each student's individual differences. Another participant, Yin, a substitute primary teacher with five years of teaching experience, viewed EFL teachers as omnipotent gods. For her, an ideal EFL teacher must have diverse talents, such as being able to sing, dance and act, must give excellent speeches, must be a great game player, and above all, must be a professional psychologist. Yin agreed with Gardner's multiple intelligences theory, and in fact, the curriculum for English education in elementary schools in Taiwan is designed with this theory in mind. Raising the interest and confidence levels of children, Yin believed, was an area in which teachers should improve.

DISCUSSION

We used a systematic inquiry into pre-service teachers' metaphors about their views of EFL teachers and language teaching. We discussed our findings in an exploratory context, and as such, these findings are not to be generalised to other teachers. Given that we do not have observational evidence on how these student teachers practised their teaching skills, we can only discuss and draw tentative conclusions about the relationships between their beliefs and practices based on the metaphors they supplied.

Metaphors were primarily student-centred

Through metaphor analysis, the study found that there were numerous ways that the participants came to terms with being an EFL teacher. Various metaphorical conceptualisations of the EFL profession emerged. The most frequently represented conceptualisations were in the supporting and guiding roles of leader, nurturer, tool-provider, and artist and in the prescribing and controlling roles of change agent, doctor and mechanic. Learners were represented by a wide range of metaphors from very active (for example, musicians, actors) to very inactive (for example, cars, patients).

Our results corroborated those of Guerrero and Villamil (2000) in that student teachers identified themselves with a sense of traditional teaching roles such as nurturer, leader, provider of knowledge and agent of change. Similar to the findings of Saban (2004), teacher candidates appeared to be less teacher-centred and more learner-centred. They had a learner-centred theoretical perspective, viewing their role

of teacher as a nurturer, cooperative leader, artist and tool provider. The most popular choices of metaphor belonged to the conceptual category of nurturer, which conveyed a strong sense of caring and love (Noddings, 2002). These nurturing metaphors viewed learners as blossoming flowers and teaching as the natural unfolding of student talent through individualised accommodations. The next most popular category was the cooperative leader, positioning the teacher as the leader and the students as active participants. In the “teacher as tool provider” category, the teacher provides the necessary assistance to the students, who should have primary ownership of their learning processes. The concept of teacher as artist portrays teaching as a unique set of personal and creative skills that teachers apply to improvise teaching according to the demands of specific situations (Sawyer, 2004). Teachers seek to develop enriching, entertaining and innovative teaching approaches to make language learning attractive, meaningful and engaging. Conclusively, the roles described in these four learner-centred categories emphasise the teacher’s willingness to relinquish control and allow the students to assume responsibility for their own work.

However, the study showed that some learners might not have sufficiently developed knowledge structures of themselves as EFL teachers, and most prospective EFL teachers are grounded more in their personal situations and histories and less in their language content areas (Stofflet, 1996). Whether the teacher candidates’ metaphors reflected the view of contemporary learning theory instead of their actual practice is worthy of exploration because it may be that the current reform efforts regarding teaching and learning were strongly oriented toward constructivist and social constructivist perspectives as opposed to the behaviourist theory, which dominates the field of education in Taiwan.

Metaphors reflected beliefs of teaching practice

As Weade and Ernst (1990) noted, metaphors of teachers’ roles in the classrooms “represent a part, but not the whole, of the phenomena they describe” (p. 133) in that “a metaphor is a compressed, imaginative expression of a perspective” (Boostrom, 1998, p. 397). However, other scholars indicated that most pre-service candidates had well-defined ideas about language teaching and their roles as EFL teachers in a language curriculum (Bullough, Knowles & Crow, 1992; Butt & Raymond, 1987; Pajares, 1992). We would argue that, in this study, the participants’ teaching metaphors reflected their beliefs about teaching practice, representing philosophical orientations to knowledge, learning and the role and responsibility of being an EFL teacher. Each of these perspectives characterises a legitimate view of language teaching when applied appropriately to relevant contexts.

The constructive, nurturing, and behaviourist perspectives differed considerably in the teachers’ views of language knowledge and in the roles of the teacher and the students in the teaching-learning process. The nurturing perspectives promoted a climate of caring and trust, helping each learner to set challenging but achievable goals and supporting learners in their achievements. Behaviourists emphasised the process of knowledge transmission by means of reward and punishment without much consideration for the learners. Constructivists, in contrast, placed more emphasis on the process of learning and viewed knowledge as being constructed by the students themselves.

For example, the teacher who compared her role to that of the vendor of a grocery store theorised her teaching practice based on Vygotsky's constructivism. She contended that the notion of a vendor was viewed as providing a variety of goods for the learners to select based on their needs. Learning is active, positive and purposeful. The teacher who compared her role to that of a clown or juggler viewed the EFL teacher as engaged in serious endeavours to make learning fun, humorous, relaxing and free. She emphasised the importance of the use of teaching aids to create a happy and lively class atmosphere and learning environment. However, a teacher cannot perform a one-man show but must walk among and interact with the audience. These examples reflect the teachers' self-images as EFL teachers and also indicate that this self-image, in turn, influences the participants' teaching strategies and behaviours in the language classroom.

This study showed that the participants' beliefs were influenced not only by how they think about teaching but also by how they interpret the experience of language teaching. The students' metaphors reflected individual values in language education, echoing the viewpoint of Connelly and Clandinin (1988) that it "makes a great deal of difference to our practice...if we think of teaching as gardening, coaching, or cooking. It makes a difference if we think of children as clay to be moulded or as players on a team or as travellers on a journey" (p. 71). As the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggested, metaphors are complex and overlapping, and growth and experience allow students to examine the complexity of metaphors. We documented the metaphor system of only pre-service language majors; how metaphor structures guide their work and change over time should be examined in the future. Boostrom (1998) noted that "to use a metaphor is not a way of *doing* teaching; it is a way of *talking about* teaching" (p. 397). Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore how these same pre-service teachers enact the practices of teaching that grow out of their initial metaphor/cognitive systems and whether their root metaphors change (for example, intensify or become more refined) over time (for example, in the entry to the programme phase, in the practicum phase, or in the induction phase), as they interact with children, other teachers, parents, administrators, and different curricula and schools.

Metaphors stem from personal and school experiences

The pre-service teachers' conceptualisation of teaching is deeply rooted in their past experiences. As Kennedy (1990) noted, "Teachers acquire seemingly indelible imprints of teaching from their own experiences as students and these imprints are tremendously difficult to shake" (p. 7). We found that our participants' personal experiences shaped their views of the EFL teacher. Some participants' metaphors stem from their personal observations. For example, one participant explained that her own personal previous learning experience had led her to view an EFL teacher as a captain who led his crew on adventures. Likewise, a participant who used the nurturer metaphor noted,

Since I learn English from junior high school, all of my English teachers pronounce well and explain grammar explicitly. This is why I chose to major in foreign language and literature because I deeply know that what a great effect an EFL teacher can do to students.

The creator of the clown metaphor also attributed the selection to her early teaching experience immediately after graduating from university. She recalled recording important notes on the blackboard as she taught, but upon noticing that the whole class was not engaged, she decided to assume a more entertaining role.

In summary, an ongoing connection was revealed between key events and people in the pre-service teachers' narratives with respect to their perceptions of the role of the teacher and their perceptions of their professional selves. The participants' metaphors supported Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship of observation concept, which states that the foundation of an individual's ideas about language teaching is well established through the experience of being a student and through other life experiences. Some student teachers entered their teacher-training programme with a reasonably well developed set of personal beliefs about what constitutes effective language teaching and learning, a belief that was formed over the years from their experiences as students.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Thornbury (1991) contends that it is important for teachers and teacher educators to have an understanding of metaphors because teachers' metaphors not only reflect their way of thinking about teaching and learning but also influence teachers' practice. Moreover, this understanding serves as a foundation so that "persistent and persuasive metaphors" that may have a "degenerate effect on conceptualising, inhibiting the development of fresh insights" (p. 195) can be examined. With this, student teachers are encouraged to use different perspectives to identify, articulate and revisit beliefs about effective language teaching. As Combs, Blume, Newman and Wass (1974) contend, teachers' self-images are determined by how they perceive themselves and their roles in society. Therefore, how a teacher's views about teaching are implemented in practice and how those views influence teaching strategies and behaviours in the classroom deserve our attention as well as further investigation.

Our results support previous studies that show that metaphorical analysis is a meaningful vehicle for raising teachers' awareness about their roles and functions in school. As Black and Halliwell (2000) state, "becoming conscious of 'images' activated by practical teaching situations is...a catalyst for professional growth" (p. 104). Martinez, Sauleda and Huber (2001) suggest that "metaphors may function as stepping stones to a new vantage point from which a teacher can look at his or her own practice as an educator from a new perspective" (p. 974). The participants expressed that the metaphor activity provided them with an opportunity to reflect on their roles as EFL teachers, to solidify their views of teaching and learning, and to liberate their thinking by distancing themselves, to a certain extent, from their everyday experiences. Identifying how potential teachers are influenced by metaphors may be sufficient for research, but student teachers should be encouraged to critically analyse the metaphors and their associated assumptions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was partially supported by the National Science Council of Taiwan, grant number (NSC96-2413-H-110-004-), R.O.C.

REFERENCES

- Ben-Peretz, M., Mendelson, N., & Kron, F. W. (2003). How teachers in different educational contexts view their roles. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 19*, 277-290.
- Black, A. L., & Halliwell, G. (2000). Accessing practical knowledge: How? Why? *Teaching and Teacher Education, 16*, 103-115.
- Block, D. (1992). Metaphors we teach and live by. *Prospect, 7*(3), 42-55.
- Boostrom, R. (1998). "Safe spaces": Reflections on an educational metaphor. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 30*, 397-408.
- BouJaoude, S. (2000). Conceptions of science teaching revealed by metaphors and by answers to open-ended questions. *Journal of Science Teacher Education, 11*, 173-186.
- Bozik, M. (2002). The college student as learner: Insight gained through metaphor analysis. *College Student Journal, 36*, 142-151.
- Brooks, N. (1964). *Language and language learning: Theory and practice*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, and World.
- Bullough, R. V., & Stokes, D. K. (1994). Analyzing personal teaching metaphors in preservice teacher education as a means for encouraging professional development. *American Educational Research Journal, 31*, 197-224.
- Bullough, R. V., Jr., Knowles, J. G., & Crow, N. A. (1992). *Emerging as a teacher*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Butt, R. L., & Raymond, D. (1987). Arguments for using qualitative approaches in understanding teacher thinking: The case for biography. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, 7*(1), 66-93.
- Cameron, L., & Low, G. (1999a). Metaphor. *Language Teaching, 32*, 77-96.
- Cameron, L., & Low, G. (Eds.) (1999b). *Researching and applying metaphor*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Cameron, L. (2003). *Metaphor in educational discourse*. London, England: Continuum.
- Cameron, L., & Deignan, A. (2006). The emergence of metaphor in discourse. *Applied Linguistics, 27*(4), 671-690.
- Carlson, T. B. (2001). Using metaphors to enhance reflectiveness among preservice teachers. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 72*, 49-53.
- Carroll, J. B., & Eifler, K. E. (2002). Servant, master, double-edged sword: Metaphors teachers use to discuss technology. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education, 10*, 235-246.
- Carter, K., (1990). Meaning and metaphor: Case knowledge in teaching. *Theory into Practice, 29*, 109-115.
- Collins, E. C., & Green, J. L. (1990). Metaphors: The construction of a perspective. *Theory into Practice, 29*, 71-77.
- Combs, A. W., Blume, R. A., Newman, A. J., & Wass, H. L. (1974). *The professional education of teachers: A humanistic approach to teacher preparation*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (1999). Bridges to learning: Metaphors of teaching, learning and language. In L. Cameron & G. Low (Eds.), *Researching and applying metaphor* (pp. 149-176.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (1998). *The metaphorical constructions of second language learners*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Association for Applied Linguistics, Seattle, WA, USA, March 1998.
- Fain, M. A. (2001). Metaphors for learning: A cognitive exercise for students. *Research Strategies*, 18, 39-48.
- Farrell, T. S. C. (2006). "The teacher is an octopus": Uncovering preservice English language teachers' prior beliefs through metaphor analysis. *RELC Journal*, 37, 236-248.
- Freeman, D., & Richards, J. C. (1993). Conceptions of teaching and the education of second language teachers. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27(2), 193-216.
- Guerrero, M. C. M. de & Villamil, O. S. (2000). Exploring teachers' roles through metaphor analysis. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34(2), 341-51.
- Guerrero, M. C. M. de & Villamil, O. S. (2002). Metaphorical conceptualisations of ESL teaching and learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 6, 95-120.
- Herron, C. (1982). Foreign-language learning approaches as metaphor. *Modern Language Journal*, 66, 235-242.
- Inbar, D. (1996). The free educational prison: Metaphors and images. *Educational Research*, 28, 77-92.
- Kennedy, M. (1990). *Policy issues in teacher education*. East Lansing, Michigan: National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.
- Kövecses, Z. (2005). *Metaphor in culture: Universality and variation*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lin, W. C. (2008). *Culture, ethnicity and English language learning: A socio-cultural study of secondary schools in Taiwan*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Cardiff University, UK.
- Lortie, D. C. (1975). *School-teacher. A sociological study*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Mahlios, M., & Maxson, M. (1998). Metaphors as structures for elementary and secondary preservice teachers' thinking. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 29, 227-240.
- Marchant, G. J. (1992). A teacher is like a...: Using simile lists to explore personal metaphors. *Language and Education*, 6(1), 33-45.
- Marshall, H. H. (1990a). Beyond the workplace metaphor: The classroom as a learning setting. *Theory into Practice*, 29, 94-101.
- Marshall, H. H. (1990b). Metaphor as an instructional tool in encouraging student teacher reflection. *Theory into Practice*, 29, 128-132.
- Martinez, M. A., Saulea, N., & Huber, G. L. (2001). Metaphors as blueprints of thinking about teaching and learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 965-977.
- Miller, S. (1987). Some comments on the utility of metaphors for educational theory and practice. *Educational Theory*, 37, 219-227.
- Munby, H. (1986). Metaphor in the thinking of teachers: An exploratory study. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 18(2), 197-209.

- Noddings, N. (2002). *Educating moral people: A caring alternative to character education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Oxford, R., Tomlinson, S., Barcelos, A., Harrington, C., Lavine, R. Z., Saleh, A., & Longhini, A. (1998). Clashing metaphors about classroom teachers: Toward a systematic typology for the language teaching field. *System*, 26, 3-50.
- Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62, 307-332.
- Palmquist, R. A. (2001). Cognitive style and users' metaphors for the web: An exploratory study. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 27, 24-32.
- Saban, A. (2004). Prospective classroom teachers' metaphorical images of selves and comparing them to those they have of their elementary and cooperating teachers. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 24, 617-635.
- Sawyer, R. K. (2004). Creative teaching: Collaborative discussion as disciplined improvisation. *Educational Researcher*, 33, 12-20.
- Shiff, R. (1979). Art and life: A metaphoric relationship. In S. Sacks (Ed.), *On metaphor* (pp. 105-120). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Stofflet, R. T. (1996). Metaphor development by secondary teachers enrolled in graduate teacher education. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 12(6), 577-589.
- Thornbury, S. (1991). Metaphors we work by. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 45(3), 193-200.
- Vadeboncoeur, J. A., & Torres, M. N. (2003). Constructing and reconstructing teaching roles: A focus on generative metaphors and dichotomies. *Discourse*, 24, 87-103.
- Weade, R., & Ernst, G. (1990). Pictures of life in classrooms, and the search for metaphors to frame them. *Theory into Practice*, 29, 133-140.
- White, B., & Smith, M. W. (1994). Metaphors in English education: Putting things in perspective. *English Education*, 26, 157-176.
- Williams, M., & Burden, R. L. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Yung, B. H. W. (2001). Examiner, policeman or students' companion: Teachers' perceptions of their role in an assessment reform. *Educational Review*, 53, 251-260.

Manuscript received: October 20, 2011

Revision received: April 19, 2012

Accepted: May 14, 2012